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INTRODUCTORY

BY THE HONORABLE ROLAND S. MORRIS,

American Ambassador to Japan.

"From war, pestilence and famine—Good Lord deliver us," has been the pleading prayer of mankind through countless generations. As Mr. Ralph A. Graves tells in a recent article, "Grim, gaunt and loathsome like the three fateful sisters of Greek mythology, war, famine and pestilence have decreed untimely death for the hosts of the earth since the beginning of time." For over three years we have increasingly felt the baneful influence of an all but world-wide war. Soberly, earnestly and with no selfish principle, but with undaunted determination, our own country has entered this war to make certain that human liberty "shall not perish from the earth." To this cause we have dedicated without reservation our manhood, our national wealth and our individual energies. But what of pestilence and famine with which human experience has linked war in its trinity of evils?

Modern science has grappled with pestilence and has thus far gained a victory which it seems to me must rank among the greatest achievements of the human intellect. Just consider it a moment. For three years millions of men have been herded together under conditions of living impossible adequately to picture, have been shot to pieces by bullets, shattered by shrapnel and shell, seared by liquid fire and suffocated by poisonous gases, have existed in narrow cramping trenches at times withered by an almost tropical sun, at others chilled to the marrow by a biting arctic wind, and yet thus far have been mercifully spared from the added horrors of that spectre of pestilence which for ages has haunted the imagination of mankind. As we think on these things may we not reverently bow our heads in gratitude to those heroic pioneers of science who in the past have again and again given their all that mankind might know the secrets of disease and also to that noble army of doctors (some from our own city) who tonight are holding at bay the ever impending spectre of pestilence which constantly threatens that far flung battle line in Europe.

And famine? Yes, it too threatens the world, and we are here tonight to take counsel once more how this third evil may be averted. To the United States of America more than to any other of the allies this question comes with impelling force. We have ever held that this vast, fertile land developed by the vision and energy of our liberty-loving pioneers is a sacred trust to be administered for the benefit of mankind—and when the test came and our President asked us, “Are you ready now that liberty is threatened and our brothers call to make good the unselfish professions of a century,” the answer came in one great chorus from every corner of our land “We are ready.”

It is because of this reponse that the wealth of our favored land and the manhood of our nation is now dedicated in one supreme effort to curb forever that spirit of aggression which threatens the right of every liberty-loving nation to develop its own traditions and conserve its own national life.

We have one great contribution to make to this great task. We must conserve so that we may give freely of our food resources to our allies and thus meet their pressing needs. How this may best be done has been the central theme of the conference now drawing to its close and we are fortunate to have with us distinguished representatives of our allies who are here to add their vital word to this discussion. Our fertile fields, our natural resources, our comparatively small population, have all tended I fear to make us an extravagant nation. No necessity up to this moment has forced us to give due thought to the needs of economy and conservation. The problem is a new one to us. We must learn the lesson, and where could we better first turn for instruction than to that island Empire with its experience of thousands of years, which has learned through that experience to overcome the limitations which nature has imposed upon it, and through economy and thrift, by the use of every square foot of available land, and by the saving of every ounce of product has reared a great Empire, developed a far-reaching civilization and given to the world an art and a literature which has made a profound impression on the standards of every other nation.